



**CIVIL AIR PATROL
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AUXILIARY
PACIFIC REGION
SAFETY
*NEWSLETTER***

January 2010

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DRIVING DISTRACTED

Several years ago I was driving on a two lane canyon road in Southern California, when an car approaching from the opposite direction suddenly swerved off of the road to its left, over corrected and crossed the center line of the road. The car was quickly converging into a head on collision with my car. With little room to steer away from the oncoming collision, I accelerated away to my left as the other car struck mine just behind the drivers door, spinning my vehicle around. As I came to an immediate stop, I watched the other vehicle roll over twice, coming to rest on its roof. I pulled the driver out of her mangled vehicle, and when she became coherent asked her what happened. She stated that some art work on the passenger seat next to her started to slip onto the floor and she tried to retrieve it. That created the scenario for a possible fatal head on collision as we were both traveling at about 50 miles per hour.

Have you heard a story like this before? Very likely? According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Nearly 80 percent of crashes and 65 percent of near-crashes involved some form of driver inattention within three seconds before the event. Primary causes of driver inattention are distracting activities, such as cell phone use, and drowsiness. The most common distraction for drivers is the use of cell phones. However, the number of crashes and near-crashes attributable to dialing is nearly identical to the number associated with talking or listening. Dialing is more dangerous but occurs less often than talking or listening. And we won't try here to discuss trying to straighten out an argument between the kids in the back seat.

Reaching for a moving object increased the risk of a crash or near-crash by 9 times; looking at an external object by 3.7 times; reading by 3 times; applying makeup by 3 times; dialing a hand-held device (typically a cell phone) by almost 3 times; and talking or listening on a hand-held device by 1.3 times. How about map reading? Just trying to orient yourself on a map can take 20 seconds or more.

THE GLASS DASHBOARD

Auto makers are now promising new options for our cars with the equivalent of the glass cockpit in our newer aircraft. Bluetooth and Wi-Fi connectivity, USB and SD card ports, LCD touchscreens, touch-sensitive buttons, turn-by-turn directions, support for Pandora and Twitter, app stores, and the list goes on. These new wonders are what every pilot has been drooling over for some time now, but unlike knobs, buttons and other manual devices, customarily found in our automobiles, that are recognized in part by touch and feel, we will need to look at a screen to start a command. Many of these features will be supported by voice commands, and at least one auto maker promises a friendly hello, when you enter your new car. (I'll bet car thieves will love that).

So, driving distracted is a current and profound problem as we race down the freeway, inserting new co-ordinates into our GPS, dialing information so that you can get the address of those coordinates and then checking your laptop, for additional info, be careful to not spill your coffee in your lap as it could make the sandwich laying there soggy and hard to eat.

**BURY YOUR HEAD INSIDE THE CAR, AND
SOMEONE MAY BURY THE REST OF YOU!
GIVE IT SOME THOUGHT!**